

Section 4 About your representative (if you have one)

This section is all about your representative, if you have one. Not everyone has a representative and if you do not have one you can skip this section and move straight to Section 5.

You are entitled to have a representative of your choice, but you must make the arrangements for this yourself. Your representative does not have to be legally qualified. He or she could be a friend or relative, but bear in mind that your representative will be provided with evidence relevant to the appeal, such as medical reports which you may regard as confidential. In choosing a representative, you should bear in mind what the role of a tribunal representative is.

A good representative should be able to:

- Advise you on what kind of evidence will help your case;
- Obtain that evidence for you or assist you to obtain it;
- Liaise with DWP to see if the case can be settled without going to a tribunal hearing;
- Research the law;
- Prepare a written statement for the tribunal summarising your case;
- Advise you on related matters, including other benefits; and,
- Deal with the consequences of the tribunal's decision, favourable or otherwise.

You are only likely to get such support from a trained representative from a reputable agency. A poor representative can actually damage your prospects of success. Most people who have a representative are represented by a professional organisation such as an advice centre or welfare rights service.

In this section on the form you will need to:

- Give the name and address of the organisation or person representing you;
- Give the phone number of the organisation or person; and,
- Give the name of the person in the organisation representing you (if you know this).

We will contact your representative about your appeal and tell them things like hearing dates and we will ask DWP to send them as well as you a copy of the papers relating to your appeal.

If you want to have a representative, but have not managed to get in touch with an advice agency yet, you may still submit your appeal and tell us when you have a representative at a later stage, however, you must do this in writing. This is because we need your written consent to take instructions from a person acting on your behalf. Often your representative will arrange this for you.

Please remember, even if you have a representative, the tribunal at the hearing will almost certainly want to speak directly with you, person-to-person, asking you questions and listening to your answers. This is because you will have first-hand knowledge and experience of the things the tribunal will most want to hear, whereas your representative would only be able to give a second-hand version.